

Message Text

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 01 PORT A 03722 072212Z
ACTION ARA-14

INFO OCT-01 ISO-00 CIAE-00 DODE-00 PM-05 H-01 INR-10
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C O N F I D E N T I A L PORT AU PRINCE 3722

E.O. 11652: GDS
TAGS: SHUM, PORS, PINT, HA
SUBJECT: SHOOTING INCIDENT OF SEPTEMBER 2

REF: PORT AU PRINCE 3686

1. SUMMARY: DETAILS OF SHOOTING INCIDENT OF SEPTEMBER 2 REMAIN UNCERTAIN. ON BALANCE, HOWEVER, EMBASSY CONCLUDES THAT OFFICIAL GOH ACCOUNT, WHICH DESCRIBES INCIDENT AS STEMMING FROM ARREST OF CRIMINALS PLANNING TO ROB CASINO AT ROYAL HAITIAN HOTEL, IS BASICALLY CORRECT. WE HAVE BEEN UNABLE TO OBTAIN ANY INFORMATION SUPPORTING VERSION BROADCAST BY HAITIAN RADIO JOURNALIST JEAN DOMINIQUE, WHO CLAIMED THAT INCIDENT REPRESENTED BRUTAL SUPPRESSION OF GROUP GATHERED TO DISCUSS HUMAN RIGHTS. END SUMMARY.

2. GOH DAILY "LE NOUVEAU MONDE" PUBLISHED ON SEPTEMBER 6 A REBUTTAL OF JEAN DOMINIQUE'S RADIO ACCOUNT OF THE SHOOTING INCIDENT THAT TOOK PLACE SEPTEMBER 2 IN THE BOLOSSE AREA OF PORT AU PRINCE. LE NOUVEAU MONDE'S ACCOUNT WAS SAID TO BE BASED ON INTERVIEWS WITH SECURITY OFFICIAL JEAN VALME AND WITH THE TWO MEN ARRESTED, JEAN ROBERT HILAIRE AND JONAS DANIEL. IT FOLLOWS THE OFFICIAL VERSION TRANSMITTED PARA 2 REFTTEL, EXCEPT THAT NO MENTION IS MADE OF CONTACTS BETWEEN SECURITY OFFICIALS AND CASINO MANAGEMENT. OTHER PRESS ACCOUNTS, WHILE DIFFERING IN DETAIL, GENERALLY FOLLOW THE SAME LINE. SEVERAL
CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 02 PORT A 03722 072212Z

ACCOUNTS QUOTE THE MOTHER OF THE MAN WHO WAS KILLED AS CLAIMING THAT HER SON WAS ONLY AN INNOCENT BYSTANDER.

3. EMBASSY OFFICERS HAVE DISCUSSED THE SEPTEMBER 2 INCIDENT WITH VALME, DOMINIQUE, CASINO MANAGEMENT, AND OTHER SOURCES. INFORMATION GATHERED TENDS TO SUBSTANTIATE GOH VERSION. FOR EXAMPLE, CASINO OPERATOR MICKEY MCLANEY (SON OF

OWNER MIKE MCLANEY) GENERALLY CONFIRMED VALME'S ACCOUNT, ALTHOUGH MCLANEY CLAIMED IGNORANCE OF DETAILS AND CLEARLY DID NOT WISH TO BE DRAWN TOO DEEPLY INTO POTENTIALLY TROUBLESOME SITUATION. EMBASSY OFFICERS OBSERVED, AND MCLANEY CONFIRMED, THAT CASION LACKS ARMED SECURITY, WHICH MAKES AT LEAST INITIAL SUCCESS OF AN ARMED ROBBERY SEEM PLAUSIBLE.

4. WHEN QUESTIONED ON DETAILS OF INCIDENT, JEAN DOMINIQUE WAS EITHER UNABLE OR UNWILLING TO PROVIDE HARD CONFIRMATION. OF THE THREE PERSONS NAMED BY VALME, DOMINIQUE SAID HE HAD NEVER HEARD OF TWO, FRANTZ ABELLARD AND JONAS DANIEL. DOMINIQUE BELIEVES THAT JEAN ROBERT HILAIRE IS A YOUNG MAN WHO WAS ONLY RECENTLY RELEASED FROM PRISON, WHERE HE HAD BEEN KEPT ON SUSPICION OF HAVING STOLEN A PISTOL, AFTER DOMINIQUE BROADCAST AN INTERVIEW WITH HILAIRE'S MOTHER DURING THE VISIT OF THE INTERAMERICAN HUMAN RIGHTS COMMISSION. ON THE OTHER HAND, DOMINIQUE ADMITTED THAT HE COULD NOT BE SURE THE HILAIRE ARRESTED ON SEPTEMBER 2 WAS IDENTICAL WITH THE HILAIRE WHOSE MOTHER HE HAD INTERVIEWED. HE COULD NOT OFFER ANY OTHER CORROBORATING EVIDENCE ASIDE FROM THE GENERAL STATEMENT THAT SEVERAL OF HIS REPORTERS HAD OBTAINED FROM SEVERAL WITNESSES AT THE SCENE INFORMATION WHICH SUBSTANTIATED THE ACCOUNT HE BROADCAST ON RADIO HAITI-INTER.

5. COMMENT: WE ARE SURPRISED THAT DOMINIQUE COULD OFFER SO LITTLE SUPPORTING EVIDENCE FOR HIS ACCOUNT, WHICH WAS CLEARLY CONFIDENTIAL

CONFIDENTIAL

PAGE 03 PORT A 03722 072212Z

HOSTILE TOWARD THE GOH. NOR HAVE WE BEEN ABLE TO GLEAN SUPPORTING INFORMATION FROM OTHER SOURCES. FROM PAST EXPERIENCE, WE WOULD EXPECT THAT IF SUPPRESSION OF HUMAN RIGHTS ACTIVISTS HAD BEEN THE TRUE MOTIVE FOR THIS INCIDENT, WE WOULD BY NOW HAVE HEARD, AT LEAST IN PRIVATE, STATEMENTS TO THAT EFFECT.

6. DOMINIQUE IS CLEARLY APPREHENSIVE, POSSIBLY BECAUSE HE REALIZES HOW FAR HE HAS PUT HIMSELF OUT ON A LIMB. THE GOH REACTION, ON THE OTHER HAND, HAS SO FAR BEEN MODERATE AND IN FACT HAS TAKEN A NEW FORM, THAT OF TAKING PUBLIC ISSUE WITH THE MEDIA (VIA A REBUTTAL IN THE GOVERNMENT DAILY) RATHER THAN COVERT INTIMIDATION. IT WAS ALSO SOMETHING OF A DEPARTURE FOR A HIGH-RANKING SECURITY OFFICIAL, VALME, TO BE IDENTIFIED AND QUOTED IN THE PRESS. ON THE WHOLE, WE BELIEVE THIS INCREASED OPENNESS IS A HEALTHY DEVELOPMENT.

JONES

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